



# GAO's Mission

*GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.*

*In carrying out this mission, GAO has helped the Congress to decide how to allocate federal funds, make decisions on pending legislation, and oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of government operations. This work has not only led to significant improvements in government programs and operations but to savings of billions of dollars. During fiscal year 1999, for example, GAO assisted the Congress in its efforts to strengthen the Social Security system, increase the accessibility to healthcare, safeguard the environment, strengthen airport security, examine the cost and effectiveness of major weapon systems, and meet the federal government's Year 2000 (Y2K) information technology challenge.*

*Overall, GAO provided more than \$20 billion in direct financial benefits in 1999, recommended more than 600 actions leading to improvements in government operations, and provided 229 testimonies requested by congressional committees. GAO returned \$57 for every \$1 appropriated to the agency.*

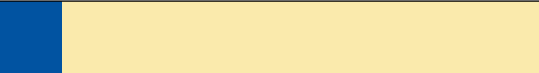
*The difference GAO makes is attributable not only to its highly qualified staff but to its adherence to its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability, which reflect dedication to good government and professional standards.*

## Core Values

**Accountability** describes the nature of GAO's work. GAO helps the Congress oversee federal programs and operations to ensure accountability to the American people. GAO's multidisciplinary staff of professionals seeks to enhance the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and credibility of the federal government both in fact and in the eyes of the American people. GAO accomplishes its mission through a variety of activities, including financial audits, program reviews, investigations, legal support, and program analyses.

**Integrity** describes the high standards that GAO sets for itself in the conduct of its work. GAO takes a professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced approach to all of its activities. Integrity is the foundation of reputation, and GAO's approach to its work ensures both.

**Reliability** describes GAO's goal for how its work is viewed by the Congress and the American public. GAO produces high-quality reports, testimony, briefings, legal opinions, and other products and services that are timely, accurate, useful, clear, and candid.



# About GAO

GAO is a legislative branch agency that supports the Congress. Created in 1921, the agency has evolved into an organization that investigates and evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of virtually the full range of federal policies and programs. GAO serves the public interest by providing members of Congress and others who make policy with accurate information, unbiased analyses, and constructive recommendations on the use of public resources and the operations of government programs. The agency also aims to serve as a model of organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in the federal government.

## The People

GAO has over 3,000 employees, two-thirds of whom work at our headquarters in Washington, D.C., minutes from Capitol Hill. We also have field office staff located throughout the United States:

Atlanta	Dayton	Norfolk
Boston	Denver	San Francisco
Chicago	Huntsville	Seattle
Dallas	Los Angeles	

GAO is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer, promoting and supporting diversity in the work force. Our employees' educational backgrounds are varied, ranging from public policy and public administration to accounting, business, economics, the social sciences, computer science, and law. More than 50 percent of our employees have graduate degrees. The major career tracks at the agency include GAO analyst, financial auditor, and specialist (for example, information technology specialist).

## The Work

GAO conducts a wide range of financial and performance audits and program evaluations and reviews the business and mission of government. Our work covers everything from the challenges of an aging population and the demands of the information age to emerging national security threats and the complexities of globalization. We are committed to management reform—to helping government agencies become organizations that are more results-oriented and accountable to the public.

Nearly all of GAO's work is mandated in legislation or requested by congressional committees or subcommittees or individual members of appropriations, authorizing, budget, or oversight committees. In doing our work, we collect information about how federal programs and activities are implemented, interview program managers and staff, and test and analyze data. We go wherever necessary to carry out this work. Often, we work in teams on-site at federal agencies, with government contractors, or with state or local governments. Our goal is to help the Congress make informed decisions and to improve government at every opportunity.

To stay at the forefront of program evaluation and audits, GAO provides staff with the training and tools that are needed to produce the kinds of important products you hear about on the nightly news: access to major information databases, use of sophisticated statistical and other computer programs, and the ability to call on world-renowned experts for advice.



# Strategic Goals and Teams

With the assistance of the Congress, GAO developed four strategic goals that will help to support the Congress in its decision-making and improve the performance and accountability of the executive branch. To achieve these goals, the agency is organized into teams that help the Congress and the federal government address issues of national significance.



## Goal 1

Provide timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to address current and emerging challenges to the well-being and financial security of the American people

- Researching options to meet the health care needs of an aging, diverse population
- Reviewing the social safety net for Americans in need
- Supporting efforts to provide for an educated citizenry
- Helping the Congress strengthen the justice system
- Analyzing the effectiveness of community investments
- Researching ways to increase responsible stewardship of natural resources and the environment
- Helping Congress maintain a safe and efficient physical infrastructure

Teams	
Education Workforce and Income Security	Natural Resources and Environment
Financial Markets and Community Investments	Physical Infrastructure
Health Care	Tax Administration and Justice



## Goal 2

Provide timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to respond to changing security threats and the challenges of global interdependence

- Helping Congress respond to diffuse threats to national and global security
- Providing analysis and other support to ensure military capabilities and readiness
- Supporting efforts to advance and protect U.S. international interests
- Assessing the impact of global market forces on U.S. economic and security interests

Teams	
Acquisition and Sourcing Management	International Affairs and Trade
	Defense Capabilities and Management



## Goal 3

Support the transition to a more results-oriented and accountable federal government

- Analyzing the government's long- and near-term fiscal position and outlook
- Examining ways to strengthen government financing
- Facilitating governmentwide management reforms
- Identifying ways to strengthen management of information technology
- Recommending economy, efficiency, and effectiveness improvements in federal agency programs

Teams	
Financial Management and Assurance	Strategic Issues
	Information Technology



## Goal 4

Maximize the value of GAO by being a model organization for the federal government

- Implementing a model strategic and annual reporting and planning process
- Establishing leading recruitment, training, and reward programs
- Developing efficient, responsive, and cutting edge business processes
- Developing and implementing a strategic human capital plan
- Implementing model appraisal systems

Teams	
General Counsel	Applied Research and Methods
Special Investigations	Quality and Risk Management
Product and Process Improvement	Mission Support teams



# Salary and Benefits

GAO has progressive compensation policies to reward high performance and comprehensive benefits to help employees strike the right balance between their work and personal lives. We offer a pay-for-performance plan and incentive awards to reward high-performing individuals. GAO also has flexible work schedules and encourages "business casual" dress at the office. Our Washington headquarters features its own fitness center, day-care center, credit union, cafeteria, and snack bar. GAO's field offices are also modern facilities, some of which have fitness and day-care centers as well.

## Salary

GAO's starting salaries are commensurate with education and experience. The base salary for entry-level staff ranges from about \$35,000 to \$50,000 depending on an individual's qualifications and the location of the position. GAO's banded pay system provides pay potential that allows for compensation based on performance.

## Vacation Leave

Annual leave (vacation) is based on length of government service, including any military service. For the first 3 years of government service, employees earn 13 days of vacation each year. For 3 to 15 years of federal service, employees earn 20 days of vacation each year, and after 15 years of federal service, employees earn 26 days of vacation each year. Thirty days of annual leave may be carried over to the next leave year.

## Sick Leave

Regardless of the length of service, employees earn 13 days of sick leave a year. The amount of sick leave that may be accumulated is not limited.

## Other Leave

Provisions for paid or unpaid leave exist to cover other absences for such reasons as maternity, military obligations, jury duty, and voting. GAO is covered by the provisions in the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act.

## Holidays

GAO observes 10 legal holidays each year.

## Health Benefits

GAO offers an excellent health insurance program. Under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, group hospitalization insurance is offered by a number of carriers. Each carrier provides for individual or family coverage, and GAO pays a portion of the premium. Employee contributions are paid with pre-tax dollars. No physical examination is required.

## Life Insurance

Individuals accepting positions with the federal government are given an opportunity to select life insurance coverage. This coverage is based on annual salary.

## Retirement

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) offers excellent benefits.

## Training

GAO invests in employees' continuous learning, providing the information and resources they need for professional growth. Intensive training programs enable staff to handle a wide range of assignments and keep them up-to-date on technological changes and major public policy issues. Management training helps prepare them for advancement opportunities.